Integration of the Swedish Local Elite: The Role of Professional and Private Networks

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This article uses social network data to study the integration of local elites in four Swedish municipalities. Four research questions are asked. First: *How integrated are the elites?* While the results modify the picture that there are two rather distinct elites in Sweden – that is, a political elite dominated by the labour movement and an economic elite dominated by business and the large business organizations – it is interesting to note that integration between elite spheres is lowest for the relation between politicians and business representatives. To a considerable degree, integration between political and economic elites is indirect, mediated through the administrative elite. The second question is: *Are the inner elite circles dominated by the political, economic or administrative elite?* The study indicates that local elites in Sweden are strongly dominated by political elites, and also by administrative elites. This is reassuring, since it would indicate a democratic deficit if the structural power of decision making in municipalities resided predominantly in economic actors and administrators. The third question is: *What is the role of friendship relations in creating elite integration?* The study indicates that private relations among elites both reinforce professional networks and extend them in important ways. The final question is: *Is elite integration contingent on political stability and/or the structure of local business?* The results are surprisingly stable across the four municipalities, even though the largest distinction was found between elite core and periphery in the politically most stable municipality, which was also the one with the lowest economic diversity.

Introduction

The study of elites is as old as social science itself, and one of the earliest – and most contested – issues was the extent to which elites were integrated. Classical elite theorists such as Pareto (1991 [1968]), Mosca (1939) and Michels (1962) usually presupposed the existence of one relatively coherent elite, whereas more recent studies have come to different conclusions. The pluralist perspective (e.g., Banfield 1961; Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963) sees elites as fragmented and primarily concerned with their own narrow interests, but with a roughly balanced overall power structure. Research in the power elite tradition, on the other hand, finds considerable elite integration

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(e.g., Mills 1956; Domhoff 1967). Higley et al. (1991, 38) take an intermediate position by demonstrating the existence of a 'large, overarching elite central circle which links or meshes with most other circles and which is the capstone of elite integration in stable democracies'. According to this view, although there is a plurality of elites or elite spheres – each more or less internally integrated – elite integration is achieved through the existence of a central elite circle.

The study of elites and elite integration has been closely linked to democracy theory. The classical elite theorists emphasized tensions between elites and democracy, whereas recent research is more divided on the issue of what role elites have in a functioning democracy, and whether an integrated or fragmented elite structure is most compatible with democracy (cf. Engelstad & Gulbrandsen 2007). Two opposing perspectives can be identified. First, elites that are too integrated – integration of political and economic elites in particular – may have negative consequences because it makes decision-making processes less transparent and because the risk of corruption increases. A too tightly integrated elite is also likely to affect accountability in a negative way – that is, the ability to replace (political) elites with others if one is dissatisfied with the decisions they have made, something which is sometimes described as a minimal requirement of a functioning democracy (e.g., Schumpeter 1947; Sartori 1987). Second, situations in which economic and political elites do not understand each another, communicate badly or not at all, or are even distrustful of one another may be harmful for society. Elites that are poorly connected hamper the flow of information and the creation of mutual trust among different spheres within the elite. Research indicates that people who interact only with others of their own kind tend toward a certain narrowness and intellectual inflexibility (e.g., Blau 1977; Ericson 1982; Putnam 2000), and this is true of elites as well as non-elites. Among other things, these people may not be as open to new and innovative information as others, in part because such information often diffuses through weak ties connecting disparate networks (Granovetter 1973; 1974). Hence, too weak integration may obstruct the flow of information across elites, lead to stagnation, and make compromises less likely. Burton and Higley and their colleagues (e.g., Burton & Higley 1987; Higley & Burton 1989; 2006; Higley et al. 1991) have emphasized the role of compromise for stable democracies, and pointed out that elite integration paves the way for compromise across elite spheres. In addition, as argued by Putnam (1976, 124), elite fragmentation may delay political reforms and the implementation of policy as well as political reforms desired by a majority.

Hence, elite integration that is either too strong or too weak may have potentially negative effects on a democratic society, and the results below will be discussed in light of this. Furthermore, even among those

emphasizing the positive effects of elite integration on democracy, there is awareness that this effect is partly contingent on which actors are centrally placed within the elites. It makes a difference whether elected politicians or business representatives and/or administrators dominate inner elite circles. The latter case would make accountability more difficult and constitute a democratic deficiency.

Popular and academic discussions often implicitly suggest that elites are national phenomena, that elites are at the very top of society. However, it is worth paying attention to elites at other levels of societal organization as well. For instance, global capitalism has clearly fostered a financial and economic elite at the supranational level. And most ordinary citizens are directly affected by elites at lower levels, whose decisions affect everyday life in very direct ways. Here we are interested in the integration of such local elites. We define 'local elites' as 'persons who are able, by virtue of their authoritative position, in powerful organizations and movements of whatever kind, to affect [local] . . . outcomes regularly and substantially' (Burton & Higley 1987, 18). In other words, we study the representatives of local government, administration and industry as an elite in itself. This elite is certainly not detached from the national elite; important industry, for instance, might be equally important in a national perspective. The automaker Volvo is a case in point for the region that we are studying and one can assume that some politicians and business(wo)men at the local level would stay both attuned and connected to the national elite because of this, if not even being part of it. The focus on the local has some important implications for the study of elite integration. In contrast to the national level, there is more direct and clearly visible feedback between political action and result against which local politicians are measured and evaluated. Not only does this make politicians highly sensitive to the expectations of common citizens and trade and industry, it also encourages close connections between the political, the economic and the executive/administrative spheres of local society. In other words, one would expect a fairly strong integration of the local elites.

In earlier research, elite integration or cohesion has been studied in different ways. One strand of research has focused on social homogeneity and has argued that common class background (upper class or upper-middle class) among political and economic elites creates common worldviews (e.g., Barton 1985; Useem & Karabel 1986; Dye 1995; Domhoff 1998). Another strand of research has focused on attitudes and values among elites and has pinpointed converging attitudes on major issues (e.g., Putnam 1976). The third strand of research, which we have adopted, looks directly at social structure in terms of social network relations in order to study elite integration (cf. Moore et al. 2002, 727). The common way of doing this has been to impute interpersonal and interorganizational

links by using 'membership network analysis' (Domhoff 1998, 23), whereas a few scholars have analyzed relations and connections reported by elites themselves (e.g., Moore 1979; Laumann & Knoke 1987; see Moore et al. 2002). Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. We have decided to follow the latter. First, following Moore (1979, 674) we believe that personal interaction among elites is the crucial dimension in elite integration: 'Without extensive connections among persons in different institutions, value consensus could not be achieved or maintained, and the development of solidarity could not occur since it requires trust and familiarity.' Second, this approach has the great advantage of allowing us to look at both professional networks and friendship networks among elites, and the ways in which these different types of networks may potentially reinforce one another. Friendship networks are often the cement that bind groups together (Kadushin 1995), and unlike professional networks, friendship relations cannot be imputed by looking at memberships.

We analyze elite network data on four municipalities in Western Sweden, collected in 2007–8. We interviewed (n = 248) leading politicians, owners and chief executive officers of major businesses within the municipalities, other representatives of local business, key administrators and representatives of other important local organization about their professional and private contacts with other elites within the municipality.

We are chiefly interested in four questions, which all have major ramifications for local democracy: (1) How well-integrated are the elites? (2) Are the inner elite circles dominated by political, economic or administrative elites? (3) What is the role of friendship relations in creating elite integration? (4) Is elite integration contingent on political stability and/or the structure of local business? In terms of the fourth question, there are good reasons to suspect that elites are more integrated in municipalities in which one political party has been in power for a long period as well as in municipalities dominated by only a few strong economic actors.

We structure the remainder of this article as follows. First, we give some background information about the Swedish case. Second, we discuss data and methods. Of particular importance is the selection of municipalities, and of elites to interview within the municipalities. We also discuss the central network measures that are used to analyze elite integration. We then present the results of the analyses. The main finding is that within-sphere integration is strong and across-sphere integration is rather weak when we look exclusively at professional networks among local elites. However, when we also account for friendship relations, across-sphere integration increases. Our findings thus point to the potential importance of friendship relations in strengthening elite integration. By combining overlapping elite networks we also identify a core, or inner circle, within the elite networks

that overlaps the four different elite spheres. Politicians and administrative elites are overrepresented within this core.

The Swedish Case

There are several good reasons to use Sweden as our particular case when studying integration among local elites. Earlier elite studies in Sweden have argued for the existence of two distinct elites, or power blocs: the political elite dominated by the labour movement, and the economic elite consisting of the major corporations and interest organizations (SOU 1990:44, 305). Traditionally these distinct elites have been seen as largely separate, characterized by differing cultures and minimal social integration between the two (Peterson 1989, 137; Hermansson et al. 1999, 246, 253; cf. SOU 2000:1).

There are only a few studies of local Swedish elites, but Drugge (1990) and Drugge and Svallfors (1991) indicated in their study of Katrineholm that the municipal level in Sweden is also characterized by having two rather distinct elites. Since these studies, however, corporatism in Sweden has become substantially weaker, and it is not implausible to expect that this change has affected the elite configurations, either by increased fragmentation because of weakened direct bonds between two clearly defined elites that were sustained institutionally during the heydays of Swedish corporatism, or by decreased internal integration within the spheres (cf. Rydgren 2005).

Local political power is concentrated in 290 municipal assemblies. The roles and responsibilities ascribed to sub-national levels of government are regulated through the Local Government Act, according to which the municipal authorities are basically responsible for all matters except health care that relate to their inhabitants and their immediate environment. This means that Swedish municipal authorities are legally or contractually responsible for the provision of all social services, child care, social care, and primary and secondary education. On more or less voluntary basis, they are furthermore responsible for providing housing, industrial and commercial services, and leisure activities for their populations.

Sweden's municipalities vary in size from small, rural units, with less than 3,000 inhabitants to metropolitan areas like the city of Stockholm (800,000). Regardless of their size, municipalities are economically important actors in Sweden. Some 760,000 people are in their employment, which makes them one of the largest and most significant employers in the country. Furthermore, almost one-quarter of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is made up of municipal expenditures, and tax-financed public services are primarily generated by municipalities. The municipality's most important political privilege is the power to levy taxes.[1]

Sweden has undergone considerable political decentralization since the late 1980s, enhancing both the importance of local government and further increasing the influence of local elites through professionalization (e.g., Montin 2005). Add to that a strong trend of increased privatization that has transformed the political landscape in the last twenty years or so, which has further shifted decision power from the national to the (regional and) local level. A particularly telling example is the independent school reform from 1992, under which municipal schools have to compete with private initiatives for pupils (see, e.g., Skolverket 2005; Böhlmark & Lindahl 2012).

Taken together, contemporary development implies that Swedish local elites are potentially more influential than ever before in postwar Sweden. It also means that local government faces considerable pressure to provide cost-efficient solutions while maintaining democratic legitimacy (see Granberg 2008). In some areas, for instance, various public services offered by the municipality are outsourced to private companies, effectively making municipal authorities important sources of income for local business. In other areas, private business is often in direct competition with municipally owned service-providers, offering equal or similar services to the public. Second, municipal administrations and private business-interests often collaborate intensely on local and regional development projects. Representatives of business communities usually partner with local government through different forums of collaboration. Finally, in times of severe economic hardship, for instance during economic crises and periods of major structural transformation, the institutional framework of municipal government acts as a lender of last resort and as an intermediary between the acute needs of local businesses and national government agencies. In such times, local businesses rely heavily on the municipal administration's willingness and ability to assist – for instance, by mitigating the impact of massive layoffs.

Data

We collected social network data on local elites in four mid-sized municipalities located in the Swedish region of Västra Götaland. We confined the study to one particular region in order to hold constant some possible inter-regional differences. In order to mitigate the possible influence of urban elite relations, we chose municipalities not immediately adjacent to large metropolitan areas. The four municipalities vary in size between 25,000 and 60,000 inhabitants. Roughly a quarter of the Swedish population lives in municipalities of this size range. With respect to size, 190 Swedish municipalities are smaller and 25 Swedish municipalities are larger than those in our sample. The municipalities were chosen in order to vary along two dimensions: their political history and the current structure of their

economies. On the first dimension we wanted municipalities with a history of social democratic dominance and those with a political history of frequent shifts in power or conservative-liberal governance. On the second dimension, we wanted municipalities that had a diversified local business and those that were dominated by one or a few large employers. Apart from the urban-rural dimension and political majority, these two dimensions are rather common in popular and political discourse about Swedish municipalities. However, these particular classifications are our own. Strictly speaking, this is not a representative sample of Swedish municipalities, but we have no reason to believe that it is so specific that no fairly general conclusions about conditions in Sweden may be drawn.

As shown in Table 1, Municipalities A and B are both politically stable. However, they differ in terms of their political orientation. Historically, Municipality A has been governed by right-wing and centre-right coalitions. This was also the case at the time of our fieldwork. Municipality B, on the other hand, has throughout its modern history been a social democratic stronghold. In Municipalities C and D, political power has been more volatile. Although Municipality D has been governed by a leftist coalition under the Social Democrats since the mid 1990s, its political history has been characterized by fairly regular shifts in political power. Municipality C has the most volatile recent political history of the four. Being an old industrial city, political power was traditionally monopolized by the Social Democrats, but recent decades have been characterized by great political turmoil. At the time of our fieldwork it was ruled by a minority coalition of right-wing parties, with a recently formed local protest party (which had campaigned on the need to clean up municipal affairs after a number of highly publicized political scandals and affairs) holding the balance of power.

With regard to economic diversity, Municipality A – an important regional centre of industry and education – has an economy structured around a few large private employers. Municipality B – an industrial town with about 30 percent of its 50,000-strong population employed in manufacturing – has a similar economic structure. At the time of our fieldwork, one large privately owned industrial company dominated the local labour market in the municipality, both directly and indirectly via a large number of dependent subcontractors. Municipalities A and B are thus characterized by relatively low levels of economic diversity.

Municipalities C and D, on the other hand, are economically rather diverse. Municipality D, which is considerably smaller than the others, with just about 25,000 inhabitants, has the character of an affluent small town. It has historically been an important regional centre for the agricultural industry, but today the largest employers here are the regional and local administrations (responsible for providing health care and education), the

Table 1. Community Characteristics and Elite Sample Composition

	Community characteristics		Composition of elite sample (n)				
	Political orientation and stability	Economic diversity	Politicians	Civil servants	Business	Miscellaneous	Total
Municipality A	Stable right wing	Low	20	9	16	12	57
Municipality B	Stable social democratic	Low	22	8	26	7	63
Municipality C	Unstable social democratic	High	20	9	19	15	63
Municipality D	Frequent shifts in power	High	22	10	23	10	65

Swedish Army and a number of smaller private enterprises, none with more than 500 employees. Municipality C used to be a flourishing industrial centre that owed much of its postwar prosperity to one of Sweden's most important shipyards that employed a substantial part of the working population from the mid-1940s and onwards. A general decline in the European shipbuilding industry, along with structural changes in the aftermath of the 1970s oil crisis, eventually led to the closing of the shipyard in the mid-1980s, resulting in massive layoffs and decades of economic and social hardship. The community has spent the last decades recovering from this major economic setback, and the diversification of its economic base has been a significant and rather successful component of that process.

The local elite is confined to three different spheres: politics, business and civil service. Politicians are nominated and elected to office in local elections every four years. Some of the politicians are active at the national level, in the Swedish parliament, and they become a particularly important link between local interests and the highest political sphere. The business elite is largely self-created at the local level, but important networking and lobbying take place in regional chapters of the Swedish Federation of Business Owners and in the various chambers of commerce. Civil servants are professionals who handle and execute political decisions. Consequently, civil servants work closely both with politicians and business representatives.

The elite in each municipality was defined and identified according to a multistep strategy. To define the network boundary,[2] we gathered background information from webpages, local newspapers, and official minutes and proceedings. For the first step, we looked at formal positions in order to identify the potentially most influential actors in each municipality, and included in the sample all prominent local politicians, business representatives, civil servants and representatives of other organizations (e.g., museums, sports associations, trade unions, health care institutions). For the politicians and civil servants, we selected on the basis of their formal positions in the organizational hierarchies of local government and administration, and important seats in the elected local political assemblies. For the business sector, we selected on the basis of size, thinking that the larger the role a company plays in the local labour market, the more important its influence on local politics and economy. In addition, we included elites that are not affiliated with the three core spheres, and here selection methods were less straightforward; if the municipality had an important sports association, we selected its chairperson; if the municipality had a strong church presence, we selected the vicar(s); if there was a large nongovernmental organization (NGO) in the municipality, we selected its executive director. In a second step, we validated this positional sample (Higley et al. 1991; Knoke & Yang 2008; Scott 2000) with local journalists and other experts on local affairs in the four municipalities, who were not in the sample. These

interviews led to minor modifications, and approximately 3 percent of the actors were added or removed on the basis of these discussions. Identifying elite groups has its particular challenges, but this combination of positional and reputational-based selection is in line with previous studies of elites (Alba & Moore 1978; Higley et al. 1979; Higley & Moore 1981; Moore 1979) and we used it to identify a sample of 298 elite actors across the four municipalities. Each one was contacted by mail and telephone. In late 2007 and early 2008, we conducted interviews with 248 persons (minimum 57 and maximum 65 respondents per municipality), which corresponds to a response rate of 83 percent.[3]

Approximately 60 percent of the interviews were conducted in person, in the respondent's office, while the remaining interviews were done over the telephone. Telephone interviews were used both because we lacked the resources to conduct all interviews in person, and as a second-best solution when it was impossible to arrange a meeting with the respondent. As far as possible we strived to get a personal interview with those respondents that we conceived as the most important actors. It is well-known that face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews may differ in quality (e.g. Holbrook et al. 2003; De Leeuw 2005; Jäckle et al. 2006). Not surprisingly, we find that prominent actors were overrepresented among those who were interviewed face-to-face. Since actor prominence is positively related to the number of contacts within the elite, those interviewed over the telephone have significantly fewer professional network ties (10.8) than those interviewed in person (17.3). However, beyond that we have no indications that the quality of our network data varies systematically between personal and telephone interview.

The length of the interviews varied between 30 and 90 minutes, and questions were heavily focused on the respondent's social networks. We used the same structured interview guide in both the personal and telephone interviews. We collected complete network data (e.g., Knoke & Yang 2008) using a roster listing the names of all elite actors in each municipality, as defined by our sample. For the telephone interviews, the respondent received the roster via email and was asked to keep it on their computer screen during the interview.

First, displaying the roster of local elites, we asked the respondent to tell us with whom he or she had discussed professional matters over the past twelve months.[4] Second, we repeated this procedure by asking respondents to indicate with whom they had relations that were not connected to work.[5] Consequently, we have information on two complete networks constituted by the same elite actors but by two different types of relations: one that captures general 'work-life' interaction, which we call '*professional*', and the other that captures 'private-life' interaction, which we call '*private*'.

Having each respondent nominate any of the elite actors listed on the roster produces directed network data – that is, for each elite actor we can distinguish between the number of incoming and outgoing nominations. In each of the four municipalities, we interviewed between 57 and 65 elite actors. Women make up 23 percent of the elite actors across the whole sample (see also Edling et al. 2013). The majority of our respondents are politicians (34 percent) and representatives of private companies (30 percent). Civil servants make up 15 percent of the sample and close to 5 percent represent public sector companies. The remaining respondents belong to a heterogeneous selection of other locally important cultural institutions and civil society organizations. A majority of the elites has a higher education; about 70 percent of the women and 50 percent of the men have a university degree. The respondents' age varies between 27 and 73 years, with a mean of 54 years for both men and women.

Analytic Strategy and Methods

Our analytic strategy involves three major steps. First, in order to measure the overall level of elite integration in our population as a whole and within and between its spheres, we calculate a number of network-level indices: *density*, *geodesic distance* and *clustering*. Both density and geodesic distance are intuitive indicators of the global level of integration within a particular network structure. Density is a measure of the number of realized connections in a network relative to the number of potential connections in the network (e.g., Wasserman & Faust 1994). If everyone is connected to everybody else, then density is 1. If all actors are isolated, then density is 0. The geodesic distance between two actors in a network is the shortest possible path between them. A 'friend', for instance, is at distance 1, while a 'friend of a friend' is at distance 2 – that is, *two steps* removed. Consequently, the average geodesic distance in a specific network is the average number of steps between any two actors in the network. It is therefore a simple indicator, with a clear underlying intuition of connectedness and social integration within a group. In a network in which everyone is connected to everybody else (i.e., where the density is 1), the average distance is 1 because any actor only needs to take one step to reach any other actor in the network. High density and short distance would indicate a highly integrated network.

Clustering is the tendency for actors to form cohesive subgroups within the network, and it is an important property of any network. We apply the idea of local clustering, which considers the number of triads in an actor's neighbourhood network – that is, the tendency of their 'friends' also being

'friends' with each other. Again, in a network with density 1, the clustering coefficient will also be 1 since everyone is connected to everyone else. Thus, high clustering is a clear indication of strong integration. However, it is important to realize that a network with zero clustering can have a significant density.

Density, distance and clustering have been calculated on the basis of the full network matrices and are reported for professional, private and combined (professional plus private) network structures. This enables us not only to describe the level of elite integration, as observed in each network structure, but also to infer the relative importance of professional and informal network ties. Thus, we will be able to measure how much informal ties in the non-professional network structure contribute to the general level of social integration among the studied elites as indicated by overall level of density in the observed networks.

As a second step in our analysis, we focus on the specific level of integration between actors in separate societal spheres. More precisely, we calculate network density only for the portion of ties that connect actors involved in different spheres, and we report these results for professional, private and combined network structures. In this manner, we study the level of integration between elite spheres.

The final step aims at studying the core-periphery structure of the local elite. We do this by means of a k-core analysis (e.g., Seidman 1983; Wasserman & Faust 1994, 266). A 'k-core' is defined as a maximal sub-network in which each node has at least degree k within the sub-network. For instance, a 3-core in a network is defined by all nodes that have at least three ties within the core. A higher k-core is always nested within the lower k-cores, so that, for instance, all nodes in the 3-core also belong to the 2-core (i.e., the nodes that have at least degree = 2). However, it is important to note that all nodes that have the same k-core value are not necessarily interconnected to each other (i.e., they are not necessarily cohesive subgroups). For each municipality we calculate the distribution of k-cores in professional and combined networks. The idea is that if a network has a distinct core-periphery structure then we should find a single, distinct and relatively small core with a high k (which is also a cohesive subgroup), with several cores with lower k scattered around it. In the distribution of k-cores this would be visible in a steep cut-off, or threshold, separating the highest k-core from the lower k-cores. In a network without any core-periphery at all, nodes would belong to the same k-core. However, a network with a more gradual core-(semi-core)-periphery structure would rather have a large range of k-cores, from the weakly connected, via the somewhat connected, to the fully connected, thus both covering the full range of k from 0 to k(max) and lacking a pronounced cut-off point.

Results

In this section, we present figures for three distinct elite spheres (politics, civil service and business) in each municipality as well as category means across municipalities, municipality means across categories and total means. Note that when we refer to the average of all elite groups, this figure includes more elite actors than the sum of politicians, civil servants and the business elite.[6] We calculate means across municipalities and discuss distinct municipalities only when there are interesting differences.

As expected, the number of professional ties by far exceeds the number of private ties among the elite. The average number of incoming and outgoing professional relations is approximately 20 across municipalities and elite spheres. The corresponding number for private relations is approximately seven. In both cases, the variation is considerable, ranging from 0 to 52 professional ties, and from 0 to 25 private ties. The degree correlations – that is, the correlation between incoming and outgoing nominations – provides another illustration of the relative symmetric and neat distribution of professional ties in contrast to the asymmetry of private ties (Table 2). Incoming and outgoing professional relations correlate strongly, with a coefficient of 0.83, indicating that a person who is nominated by many (indegree) also nominates many others (outdegree), and vice versa. For private ties, the correlation is 0.46, thus there is more variation in the number of incoming private nominations for any given number of outgoing nominations. There are (very) few actors with zero incoming or zero outgoing ties. Eight actors in total score zero on ingoing or outgoing nominations in least one type of relation, and only one actor had no relations at all. One may conclude that on the surface, the local elite is integrated in the sense that close to all elite actors are connected to minimally one other elite actor, and that, on average, an elite actor has 27 incoming and outgoing nominations (median = 26) among the elite, suggesting a high degree of elite integration. In the following analysis and discussion, we focus solely on reciprocated ties between elite actors – in other words, we only account for a tie between A and B when they both nominated each other.[7]

If we assume that a closely connected network is an indication of integration, it is interesting to consider network density. We find that the elites have a density of 0.24 in their work-related networks, and 0.26 in the combined networks – that is, in the network structure that contains both work-related and private ties (Table 3). This means that about a quarter of all ties that could possibly be formed among the elites are actually observed. This is a strong indicator of the propensity to form social ties, and consequently as a strong indication of elite integration. Of course, we are looking at professional relations among the local elite, so we would generally expect

Table 2. Degree Correlations (Pearson's r)

		Professional		Friendship/private		Combined	
		Indegree	Outdegree	Indegree	Outdegree	Indegree	Outdegree
Professional	Indegree	1	0.831**	0.685**	0.201**	0.969**	0.751**
	Outdegree	0.831**	1	0.555**	0.243**	0.800**	0.904**
Friendship/private	Indegree	0.685**	0.555**	1	0.465**	0.844**	0.647**
	Outdegree	0.201**	0.234**	0.465**	1	0.306**	0.634**
Combined	Indegree	0.969**	0.800**	0.844**	0.306**	1	0.772**
	Outdegree	0.751**	0.904**	0.647**	0.634**	0.772**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 3. Network Density, Municipalities A–D

	Professional					Private/friendship					Combined				
	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average
All	0.219	0.247	0.243	0.249	0.239	0.042	0.031	0.046	0.054	0.043	0.227	0.260	0.266	0.270	0.256
Politics	0.437	0.602	0.595	0.662	0.574	0.058	0.048	0.074	0.091	0.068	0.437	0.606	0.621	0.693	0.589
Civil service	0.806	0.893	0.778	0.511	0.747	0.028	0.036	0.083	0.022	0.042	0.806	0.893	0.778	0.533	0.752
Business	0.225	0.138	0.240	0.198	0.200	0.117	0.028	0.088	0.075	0.077	0.233	0.154	0.292	0.209	0.222

a high number here. When we consider density within elite spheres, this is emphasized even further. Civil servants, for instance, who must cooperate in executing political decisions, have an extremely high density in the professional relations network (d = 0.75, on average). The business elite, on the other hand, whose professional relations should emerge also from competition, has a considerably lower density in the professional relations network (d = 0.2). Finally, we note that among politicians the density of the professional relations network is 0.57, on average, ranging from 0.43 to 0.66. This indicates that professional interaction among politicians extends across political divides.

Density is much lower in the private network and differences between elites are not as stark for the density of private relation networks, with the core spheres ranging from 0.04 to 0.08.[8] Although differences are not substantial, it is interesting to note that the business elite is the most sociable of the three. Therefore, when we consider the combined professional and private network density hardly changes. On average, the business elite has a professional network density of 0.2, a private network density of 0.08 and a combined network density of 0.22. Thus, comparing the density of professional, private and combined networks clearly indicates that there is considerable overlap between private network and professional network – that is, one's friends in the elite also tend to be the elite people with whom one has professional relations. This suggests that private relations reinforce rather than complement professional relations. In fact, around 18 percent of all ties in the network of combined professional and private relations are such multiplex ties (e.g., Verbrugge 1979) – that is, a tie between two actors that contains both professional and a private relation (see Table 4). In terms of elite integration, professional relations connect the local elite into a very dense network, within which the civil service and political spheres are extremely interconnected. Private relations do not contribute to further tie together the elite at the overall level; rather, they reinforce a significant proportion of the professional ties.

Additional statistics strengthen the picture above. The average distance between any two actors in a network is an intuitive measure of integration

Table 4. Overlapping (Multiplex) Social Ties (%)

	All professional and private ties	Only reciprocal social ties
Municipality A	23	13
Municipality B	15	6
Municipality C	17	8
Municipality D	19	11
Combined	18	9

in the sense that short distance implies both short communication routes and direct social influence. The average distance in the local elite networks is 1.8 for the professional relations and 3.1 for the private relations (Table 5), which shows that the elite are indeed well-integrated, and that most elite actors can reach any of the other elites in two steps or less. In some spheres, the distance is effectively 1; on average, civil servants are 1.22 steps from each other in professional relations. For politicians, the corresponding figure is 1.36. We find the greatest discrepancy in distance between professional and private relations in the political sphere. Here the average distance in private relations is 1.8, which could suggest that politicians are more inclined than other elites to separate professional and private relations. But one could also imagine that this pattern is generated by the fact that the political elite might have their friends among the ideologically like-minded, whereas their political mandate forces them into professional interaction with actors at the opposite end of the political spectrum. Overall, the short average distance between elites across spheres and municipalities is another indication of strong elite integration.

Clustering statistics also adds to the impression that we are dealing with a strongly integrated elite (see Table 6). We observe very high clustering in the local elite networks. For private relations, the local clustering coefficient is 0.54, on average, ranging from 0.39 in the business elite to 0.81 in the civil service elite. Clustering is not as pronounced in private relations, but still substantial. The private relations in the political elite are highly clustered (0.45) compared to the private relations among the business elite (0.24), revealing a much stronger tendency among the political elite to interact with 'friends of friends'.[9]

So far, we have considered overall integration and within-sphere integration, but we are also interested in between-sphere integration. In other words, is the elite of one sphere inclined to interact with elites belonging to another sphere? We take a straightforward approach to this question by simply calculating the density of relations that bridge two bordering spheres. Consider politicians and civil servants in Municipality A, there are 20 actors in the political sphere and nine actors in the civil service sphere. Consequently, the maximum number of relations that can be realized in a directed network is 360. For professional relations we observe 198 relations (Table 7). We now calculate the density of the politics/civil servant interface and find it to be 0.55 – that is, 55 percent of all possible professional ties that could exist between politicians and civil servants in Municipality A are actually realized. Politics and business are the least integrated spheres according to this measure, with a low of 0.21 in Municipalities B and D and a high of 0.28 in Municipality C. Not surprisingly, politics and civil service are the most professionally integrated, with a low of 0.46 in Municipality D

Table 5. Average Geodesic Distances, Municipalities A–D

	Professional					Private/friendship					Combined				
	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average
All	1.830	1.866	1.897	1.736	1.832	2.907	3.800	2.639	2.929	3.069	1.806	1.866	1.826	1.796	1.823
Politics	1.404	1.411	1.416	1.195	1.357	1.793	1.840	1.632	1.909	1.793	1.404	1.407	1.384	1.238	1.358
Civil service	1.194	1.107	1.222	1.361	1.221	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.194	1.107	1.222	1.333	1.214
Business	1.989	2.391	1.971	1.772	2.031	2.145	2.677	1.844	2.076	2.186	1.945	2.308	1.794	1.691	1.935

Table 6. Average Local Clustering Coefficients, Municipalities A–D

|	Professional					Private/friendship					Combined				
	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average	A	B	C	D	Average
All	0.522	0.542	0.524	0.553	0.535	0.281	0.231	0.288	0.273	0.268	0.517	0.537	0.535	0.542	0.533
Politics	0.826	0.748	0.695	0.857	0.781	0.480	0.400	0.324	0.590	0.449	0.826	0.748	0.735	0.840	0.787
Civil service	0.796	0.896	0.835	0.703	0.807	n/a	n/a	1.000	n/a	n/a	0.796	0.896	0.835	0.737	0.816
Business	0.398	0.299	0.375	0.495	0.392	0.182	0.000	0.447	0.310	0.235	0.397	0.310	0.498	0.500	0.426

Table 7. Density in Between-sphere Sub-networks, Municipalities A–D

	Sphere (a)	Sphere (b)	N (a)	N (b)	Theoretical maximum number of connections	Professional-observed	Private-observed	Combined-observed	Professional density	Private density	Combined density
Municipality A	All spheres				2,368	620	234	663	0.26	0.10	0.28
	Politics	Civil service	20	9	360	198	24	200	0.55	0.07	0.56
	Politics	Business	20	16	640	160	60	165	0.25	0.09	0.26
	Politics	Miscellaneous	20	12	480	88	53	98	0.18	0.11	0.20
	Civil service	Business	9	16	288	87	32	89	0.30	0.11	0.31
	Civil service	Miscellaneous	9	12	216	36	17	43	0.17	0.08	0.20
	Business	Miscellaneous	16	12	384	51	48	68	0.13	0.13	0.18
Municipality B	All spheres				2,696	707	229	806	0.26	0.08	0.30
	Politics	Civil service	22	8	352	185	35	197	0.53	0.10	0.56
	Politics	Business	22	26	1,144	236	59	255	0.21	0.05	0.22
	Politics	Miscellaneous	22	7	308	75	30	93	0.24	0.10	0.30
	Civil service	Business	8	26	416	126	46	140	0.30	0.11	0.34
	Civil service	Miscellaneous	8	7	112	28	18	42	0.25	0.16	0.38
	Business	Miscellaneous	26	7	364	57	41	79	0.16	0.11	0.22
Municipality C	All spheres				2,902	813	309	936	0.28	0.11	0.32
	Politics	Civil service	20	9	360	211	22	212	0.59	0.06	0.59
	Politics	Business	20	19	760	210	94	254	0.28	0.12	0.33
	Politics	Miscellaneous	20	15	600	104	42	122	0.17	0.07	0.20
	Civil service	Business	9	19	342	136	55	148	0.40	0.16	0.43
	Civil service	Miscellaneous	9	15	270	57	28	72	0.21	0.10	0.27
	Business	Miscellaneous	19	15	570	95	68	128	0.17	0.12	0.22
Municipality D	All spheres				3,012	863	379	1,008	0.29	0.13	0.33
	Politics	Civil service	22	10	440	201	33	215	0.46	0.08	0.49
	Politics	Business	22	23	1,012	211	101	215	0.21	0.10	0.21
	Politics	Miscellaneous	22	10	440	155	70	178	0.35	0.16	0.40
	Civil service	Business	10	23	460	143	65	167	0.31	0.14	0.36
	Civil service	Miscellaneous	10	10	200	69	35	78	0.35	0.18	0.39
	Business	Miscellaneous	23	10	460	84	75	114	0.18	0.16	0.25

and a high of 0.59 in Municipality C. Business and civil service are more integrated than business and politics, but considerably less integrated than politics and civil service. We find another order in the between-sphere density for private relationships, where business and civil service are the most integrated, with between-sphere density ranging from 0.11 in Municipalities A and B to 0.16 in Municipality C. All in all, the between-sphere density analysis further underscores the impression that the local elites are well-integrated. Some of this integration is clearly functional, such as the strong links between politicians and civil servants, which would explain why this pair scores so high on this metric.

Finally, we take a look at the core-periphery structure of local elite networks by means of a k-core analysis. The k-core distribution in Figure 1 again indicates that the network structures of the four municipalities share many properties but also that there are noteworthy differences. We only show the k-core distributions of the professional and the combined networks. The k-core of the private networks has a short and highly uniform range, and is not very interesting in and by itself. Figure 1 should be read in the following way: the x-axis mark the observed k-cores, ranging from 0-core to k(max)-core, where k(max) range from 11 (municipality A) to 13 (municipality D). The y-axis gives the share of nodes with a particular k-core. Recall that higher k-cores are nested within lower k-cores, so that the lines plotted in Figure 1 always describe a declining cumulative function. Thus we can read off that, for instance, all nodes belong to the 0-core, or that

Figure 1. K-core Distribution, Municipalities A–D, Professional Ties Only.
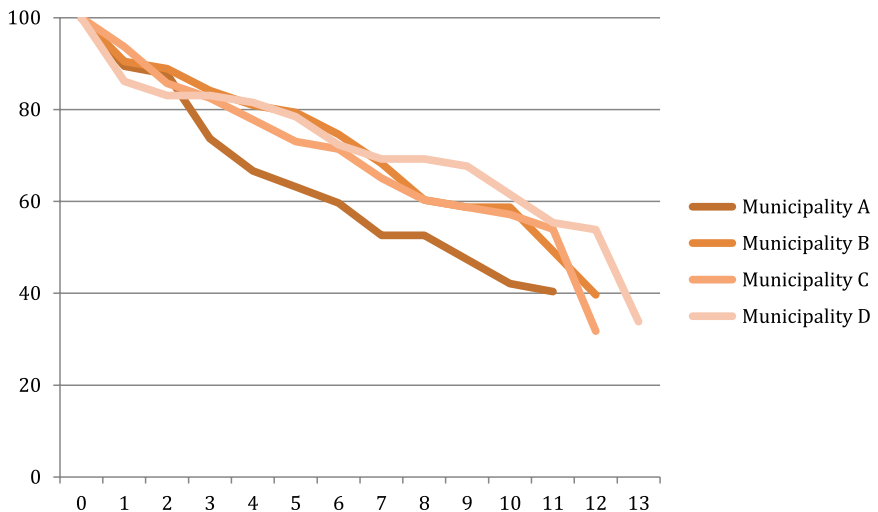
40 percent of the nodes in municipality A belong to the 11-core. As has already been suggested, if the local elite had a prototypical core-periphery structure, then the k(max)-core should be relatively small and the distributions plotted in Figure 1 should display a distinct cut-off setting the k(max)-core apart from the other k-cores. Furthermore, the distribution should have the majority of nodes belonging to low k-cores. First, there is a rather smooth transition from low to high k-cores across all four professional networks, indicating that none of the four municipalities has an extremely distinct core-periphery structure, but rather a gradual transition from the (small) periphery to the core. Second, each network does have a maximum k-core consisting of around 30–40 percent of the elite, suggesting a fairly large core. Third, all networks also have a similar size of the maximum k-core (11–13). This suggests that elite integration have the same underlying dynamic in all four municipalities and that while the elite does not have a strict core-periphery structure, one may talk about a core-semicore-periphery structure.

A couple of differences are worth noticing. First, in Municipality A around 25 percent of the elite belong to the 3-core or less. This is considerably less than in the other three municipalities. Thus the 25 percent elite-periphery is much less connected compared to the core in Municipality A in comparison to the other three municipalities. Those three municipalities (B, C, D), on the other hand, have a much more distinct maximum k-core. Some 20 percent of the elite become disconnected in these three municipalities when moving from the second highest to the highest k-core. In Municipality A, that shift is hardly noticeable.

When considering professional ties in conjunction with private ties (Figure 2), we notice that the maximum k-core increases in all four municipalities. However, even more interesting is the change in the size of the k-core. In Municipalities A and B we still observe that around 40 percent of the elite belong to the maximum k-core. In Municipalities C and D, however, private ties serve a highly inclusive function, raising the share of elite belonging to the maximum k-core to some 55 percent – that is, more than half of the elite population in those municipalities. It seems that in Municipality A and B, private relations do not upset the professional core-periphery structure, whereas in Municipality C and D private relations bring more elite actors into the core. Another way to put this is that private relations overlap professional relations in Municipality A and B, whereas in Municipality C and D private relations complement professional relations.

Even though we could make no causal claims based on these data, the difference should be considered in light of the political and economic trajectories of the four municipalities. Recall that Municipality A is a fairly well-off community with a long period of politically stable centre-right rule

Figure 2. K-core Distribution, Professional and Private Ties Combined.
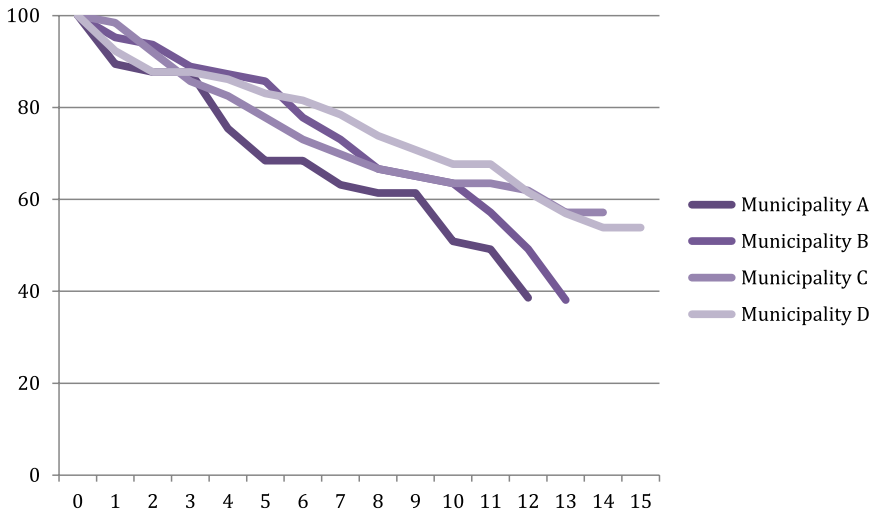
and an economy dominated by few but significant private companies. Among the four communities we study, Municipality A is also closest to a 'strong version' of a core-periphery structure. It may be argued that the higher share of peripheral actors in Municipality A is an indication of low levels of social integration within the elite as a whole and a stronger concentration of power into a relatively speaking smaller core.

Figure 3 illustrates the sphere composition of the highest k-cores, compared to the other k-cores in Municipality C (all municipalities share a similar pattern). The overrepresentation of the political sphere in the highest cores is striking. From the perspective of representative democracy, this implies that the democratically elected political elite plays a central role in local decision making. Civil servants, being the executive arm of politicians, are also overrepresented in the top cores. It is also noteworthy that the business sphere is well-represented in the top core (Figure 3). In fact, half of the business elite is situated within the two top-cores, suggesting a strong presence of economical interest in local decision making.

Conclusion

The results indicate that Swedish local elites are overall very well-integrated. Both the fairly high density of their networks and the short average distances that separate them indicate this. Their strong propensity

Figure 3. Core Composition, Municipality C.
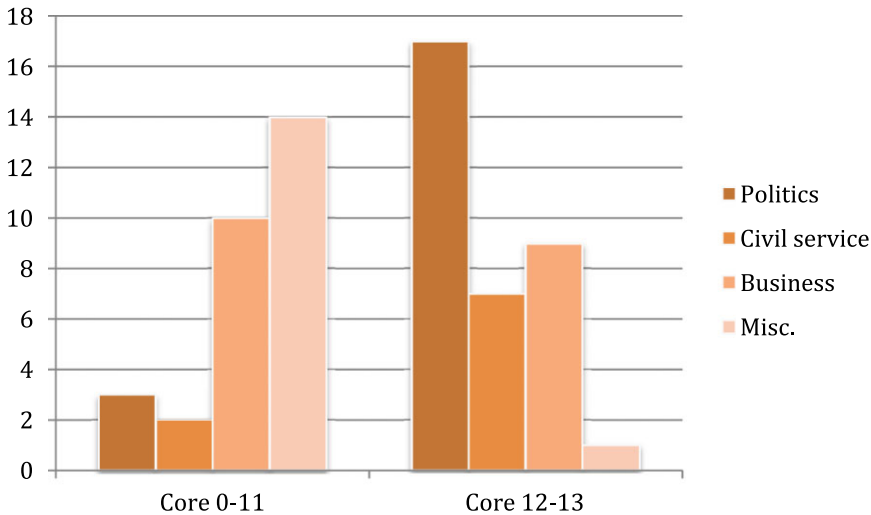
to cluster into closed social circles and their tendency to form strong recip-
rocal ties to one another further augment the picture that Swedish local
elites are on the whole a structurally well-integrated group of actors. It
would not be an exaggeration to view them primarily as a single united
social group rather than a number of loosely connected and essentially
separate elite groups or fractions.

Recapping the above findings, we found only small between-municipality
differences, which suggest that the general *level* of local elite integration in
Sweden is stable across different municipal settings regardless of their
history of political stability and/or the breadth of their economic base. This
picture, however, becomes more varied if we focus on the purely structural
features of the studied elites' networks.

Thus, our results question the picture that there are two rather distinct
elites in Sweden: a political elite dominated by the labour movement, and an
economic elite dominated by business and the large business organizations.
As was discussed above, the level of elite integration may have important
ramifications for the functioning of democracy in municipalities and for
economic efficacy. Whereas well-integrated elites facilitate compromise and
innovation by fostering mutual trust and greasing the flow of information
across different spheres, too strong elite integration may have serious nega-
tive sides, such as making decision-making processes less transparent and
decreasing the level of accountability. Are local elites in Sweden too
strongly integrated then? Based on our results, we would say that they are

probably not. However, we are aware that we are in a poor position to provide a conclusive answer to this important question, which is why we have to leave to future research the more direct study of *the effects* of local elite integration. Future research should also study to what extent the high level of elite integration in Swedish municipalities is a result of political and structural changes, such as decentralization, privatization and the decreased importance of corporatism, or if it is rather a more stable characteristics of local politics.

It is also interesting to note that integration between elite spheres is lowest for the relation between politicians and business representatives. To a considerable degree, integration between political and economic elites is indirect, mediated through the administrative elite. Moreover, our study indicates that local elites in Sweden are strongly dominated by an amalgamation of political and administrative elites. This is reassuring, since it would indicate a democratic deficit if the structural power of decision making in municipalities resided predominantly with economic actors and administrators.

The results furthermore indicate that private relations among elites both reinforce professional networks and extend them in important ways, pointing to the importance of taking different types of interpersonal relations into account when assessing the level of elite integration. The high level of multiplex overlap between professional and private ties does, however, indicate that the role of private ties is to reinforce the elites' professionally established social structures. The elites' friendship networks do not constitute a fully alternative or parallel social universe to the official one – a finding which to some extent should be expected in a stable democracy such a Sweden, but which is nevertheless reassuring from a democratic point of view.

As an aspect of the studied elites' social integration, multiplexity is here obviously regarded from a structural, global point of view on their networks. At the level of the individual elite actor, however, multiplexity may have a potentially non-trivial effect upon municipal politics. It is, for instance, reasonable to assume that political actor i's influence over political actor j, at least to some extent, is a function of the level of multiplexity between the two. Such processes among local elites are not well understood, and future research should seek to shed light upon the mechanisms which drive multiplex tie formation among elites, as well as study the concrete political consequences of elite network multiplexity.

Future research should also try to map local elite structures over time to increase our knowledge about structural dynamics as a result of local elections, economic restructuring and individual tenures and careers. Moreover, it should also consider the relationship between elite structures and efficacy in policy making, as well as other relevant political outcomes.[10]

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NOTES

1. The government can interfere in times of economic crisis, as it did in 1990 when it introduced a law to prevent increase of municipal tax rates for three years, in 1991–3.
2. Boundary specification is critical to network analysis, and is almost always arbitrary. The challenge is to strike a balance between pragmatics (i.e., limited research and cognitive resources) and a good enough definition that assures that all the 'important' actors and/or relations are included in the network.
3. The response rate per municipality varies between 80.3 percent in Municipality A and 87.5 percent in Municipality B.
4. The exact wording of the question was: 'First of all, I would like you to look over the names on this list and mark with an X in column A those persons with whom you have had some form of work-related contact during the past twelve months.'
5. The exact wording of the question was: 'Second, I would like you once again to look over the names on the list and mark with an X in column B those persons with whom you have had some other, non-work-related, private form of contact during the past twelve months.'
6. The internal integration among actors in the *miscellaneous elites* category has not been studied since these actors cannot be considered as belonging to one specific functional domain of elites in the same sense as politicians, representatives of local business or civil service administrators.
7. As suggested by one of the reviewers, future analyses should look more closely into these correlations for different elites, and particularly for private relations. One might hypothesize, for instance, that some subgroups are more likely to reciprocate friendship nominations than others.
8. This might strike the reader as exceptionally small figures. Our intuition is that in the Swedish context, a private relationship is conceived of as close and personal relationship – that is, rather than being people you occasionally go out with and meet at the club, the private relations are with people whom you invite to your home and with whom you share personal matters (e.g., Marsden 1987).
9. In some political systems, one would expect the political elite to be internally highly clustered (see, e.g., Pascal et al. 1996), but perhaps not so in Sweden. The general social mechanism creating social clustering is 'homophily' – that is, either the preference for or the selection into interacting with others who resemble one's self. We do not have the data to follow this lead, but Leuschner's (2011) work on political friendships in the German *Bundestag* points to an interesting interaction between strategic and intimate friendship in the political sphere that could lead to clustering tendencies.
10. We found no obvious connections between the level of elite integration and trust in local politicians and local public administration across the four municipalities, when examining pooled data from SOM-Väst.

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